

# DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, October 13, 2000

## From My Perspective

*By Ken Patterson*

As you know in June a decision was reached to consolidate the Salt Lake, Granite, and Cottonwood Regions back into a single Region. Coming off the hiring freeze, ending contracted case management, and seeing caseloads creep up in these Regions, it seemed to make sense to have administrative expenses be lean and for the resulting savings to be used to strengthen direct services. A work group led by Laray Brown has been meeting since July. They developed several suggested organization charts, one of which was approved by Robin Arnold-William and myself.

On October 30, all Salt Lake, Granite, and Cottonwood staff will be invited to the inaugural staff meeting of the new Region. The name of the new Region will be announced, the Regional Organizational Chart will be explained, and Laray will introduce the Associate Region Directors, the Community Service Managers, and the DHS Administrator I positions. I can tell you now that Heber Tippetts will be an Associate Region Director over programs and that Spence Morgan will be a DHS Administrator I over CPS Intake, 24-hour meetings, Family Unity Meetings, and Training. We will then explain the time frames for organizing the remainder of the Region under the Community Service Managers and DHS Administrator Is. All of the current offices and neighborhood teams will remain. We will be looking to increase the number of neighborhood teams and service locations in the coming year. There will be time in the meeting for questions and answers.

There has been much speculation about what the management size of the new region would be, so let me answer that question now. The former Salt Lake, Granite, and Cottonwood Regions had three Region Directors, three Associate Region Directors, and 11 Community Service Managers, for a total of 17. The new Region will have one Region Director, two Associate Region Directors, five Community Service Managers, and three DHS Administrator Is, for a total of 11. This is a 35% reduction in administrative staff in these areas. I will write more information when the remainder of the organizational changes is announced.

## Every Child Welfare Worker Needs to Know Basic ICWA

*By Richard Anderson*

I hope you didn't ask, "What is an ICWA?" Yet, there may be some of us who are still learning these things. Here are a few questions and answers on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Everyone please read this short message so you are briefed on this important law.

**Who must abide by this law?** Everyone. The ICWA takes precedence over other state and federal child welfare laws. In Utah, we require that every child protective service worker ask if children are or could be a member of a Native American tribe.

**When did this become law?** The ICWA was created in 1978 to re-establish tribal authority over the adoption of Native American children.

**Why was such a law needed?** The goal was to strengthen and preserve Native American families and culture through re-establishing tribal authority over the adoption of Native American children. Before the passage of this law, a very high percentage of Indian families were separated because non-tribal agencies removed children. A lack of understanding and acceptance of Indian culture led to a high removal rate.

**Who does the law apply to?** Native American children under the age of 18 years and who are not married are covered. The child must be either a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe or must be eligible for membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe.

**What does the law provide?** Court hearings on the placement of Indian children are to be held in tribal courts, when possible, allowing for the child's tribe to be involved in the proceedings. The ICWA requires expert testimony from expert witnesses who are familiar with Indian culture. If the child is removed for foster care or adoption, the law requires that Indian children be placed with extended family members, other tribal members, or other Indian families.

**What if a child is not living on the reservation, does the ICWA still apply?** Yes. The ICWA has a notice requirement. This means that if a state takes a child into custody, it must give notice to the child's tribe, wherever the child may be in the United States.

**Does the act apply to a couple getting a divorce?** No.

**Who decides if the child is a member of a tribe?** The law leaves it up to each Native American tribe to make such determinations. Child welfare professionals are required to ask if children are members of a Native American tribe or if they could be members of a tribe. If the answer is yes, then the respective tribe is to be immediately notified of the proceedings.

**Who are the Utah contacts for ICWA?** Your supervisor can be the best first contact. The assistant attorney general for your office or region is a good contact. The statewide contacts are Al Young, supervisor in the Blanding Office, at (435) 678-1491 or Richard Anderson, DCFS deputy director, at (801) 538-4656. (The assistant attorneys general have Christina Richard, in Moab, as their contact.)

**(Most of these questions and the subsequent answers came from an update on the ICWA from the Wabanaki Legal News.)**

If you would like to read the entire ICWA, you may access it on the following web site:  
<http://www.nicwa.org/policy/theact.htm>.

## New SAFE Release

By Robert Lewis

During this coming week a new release of SAFE will become available, release 2.208. The changes largely involve correcting some continuing problems in Progress Summary. Thanks to the Jackson, Metro, Kearns, and West Valley offices for helping with testing.

SCF Problems Corrected	In-Home Problems Corrected
Eliminate #6 errors Eliminate the line duplication problem Print permanency goal Print objectives in same order as service plan Finalize and save	Print recommendations field in Court Reports Ability to mark supervisor approval box

## What to do When a Client Dies

By Cheryl Dalley

A social worker's worst nightmare is that a child will die while receiving services from DCFS. Fortunately, the chances of a death occurring are low. However, when a client dies who is currently receiving services or who has received services within 12 months prior to the death (CPS investigation, In-Home, Out-of-Home, etc.), please notify me (Cheryl Dalley, DHS Fatality Review Coordinator) within three days of the death. In order to provide some brief background information on the decedent, the social worker should complete the Deceased Client Report, which can be accessed through the SAFE system, and send it to me at the Office of Services Review, 120 North 200 West, #323. I will then request that the office originating the report send me the case file for review, will make a written summary of the case record, will conduct an analysis of systemic performance, and will make a recommendation as to whether or not the case should have a formal review by the fatality review committee.

The purpose of the fatality review is to determine if there are ways that we can prevent future deaths. The review looks at some significant issues and asks two main questions: *Is there something the system did or did not do that might be linked directly to the child's death?* and *Does the case illustrate where there might be significant practice improvement opportunities?* Department policy dictates that the case be reviewed shortly after the death, and best practice dictates that the review be conducted while issues and details are still fresh in our minds.

Hopefully, you will not have need of this information, but if you do, please follow the steps outlined above. Your help in this area will be greatly appreciated.

## Special Awards Presented at the Child Welfare Institute

By Richard Anderson

At the Child Welfare Institute's luncheon held at the Provo Marriott on October 4th, several special awards were presented. As some of our people may not have been able to attend, we wanted to mention these in our Weekly Update. The seven "Excellence in

Practice" award honorees were nominated by their own regions and were recognized as exemplifying sound practice as presented in our practice model.

- Service and Advocacy for Utah's Children and Families: DCFS recognized Representative **Nora B. Stephens** for her outstanding service and advocacy for Utah's Children and Families. Her daughter wrote a stirring tribute introducing Nora—both as an outstanding mother and legislator. Her services and dedication on behalf of Utah's children have been a great benefit to DCFS and to the children and families of the state, and her wise, gracious presence will be greatly missed.
- Excellence in Working with the Attorney General's Office in Defending the Rights of Children in the State of Utah: **Niki Wolfe** was nominated for this award by the Attorney General's office. She works with foster care staff workers as well as with the teenage population. She works out of the Magna Office, is dedicated to hard work, and is always willing to go the extra mile and mentor new workers.
- Excellence in Practice Award: DCFS recognizes the following people for Excellence in Practice best exemplifying the practice model in serving the children and families in Utah.

**Brenda Barrus**, Granite: Brenda, with 10 years in DCFS, is Foster Care Supervisor in the Kearns/Taylorville neighborhood. Recently, one worker was heard to comment, "Brenda makes the Energizer Bunny look like he's standing still!" She works one-on-one when there is a need to help a worker manage cases, going to court, staffing, and talking with collateral agencies, plus she organizes hikes and awards to encourage people and keep spirits up. Brenda has embraced the principles of the practice model and works constantly to improve her own skills and to help others learn.

**Louise Brown**, Western: Louise is a clinically licensed adoption specialist who came to Provo DCFS in 1994. She is a gifted teacher, having taught everything from Child Welfare at BYU to Wyoming public school (including CORE 102), and she is always in demand to share her talents, enlightening others on complex issues involving neglected and abused children and special needs adoptions. She exemplifies practice model principles in all that she does. She works with never-ending diligence for the benefit of her clients and is widely known as a dedicated child advocate.

**Laura Clark**, Salt Lake City: Laura always goes the extra mile to back up her workers in times of need, as well as the families we serve. Her excellent clinical skills allow her to be a great family resource, and she is often called upon to do crisis assessments at the court. As a result of her excellent assessment skills, she has saved the agency thousands of dollars by avoiding inappropriate residential placements.

**Jann Nishimoto**, Cottonwood: Jann was assigned to be supervisor of a unit during a time of turmoil. Her calm, direct approach to staff, and the respect she showed for leadership past and present brought stability and direction to the unit. She has demonstrated the ability to select and train staff to be sensitive to the needs of both children and parents, creating a team of strong individual caseworkers and a quality, community-minded unit.

**Julie Willden**, Southwest: Julie is a lead worker with the CPS unit in St. George. She has handled 90 percent of the sexual abuse cases in the area for the past five years and is a hard working, dedicated person, regarded with respect and admiration by her co-workers as well as by law enforcement, Attorney Generals, court officials, medical professionals, and other community partners. The children she works with love and trust her. She is professional

in every way, yet with children she is gentle and understanding, listening to them and, better yet, hearing them.

**Nancy Dunn**, Northern: Nancy is one of the domestic violence specialists in the CPS Ogden office. She has been team leader for two years. She is extremely dedicated and often follows her cases well beyond the CPS investigation. She is sensitive to the needs of the victims of domestic violence, and continually demonstrates caring, kindness, and compassion without ever losing sight of the safety of the children.

**Darla Taylor**, Eastern: Darla consistently carries more than a full caseload while serving as lead worker. She mentors all new employees, is the office SAFE expert, constantly promotes and develops community partnerships (they regularly call her at home for advice), provides training in the office as well as in the community, and serves on several boards. She is chair of the CPS steering committee, and voluntarily takes on numerous committee tasks. She is a tremendous asset to that committee, state CPS workers, and especially her own office.

- DCFS Special Lifetime Achievement Award: Everyone laughed when **Pat Rothermich** assured us, "There is life after DCFS!" She was given this award with much gratitude for a lifetime of dedicated service: "Your years of dreaming of, caring about and striving for better lives for children, families and colleagues has created, and will continually give birth to, generations of healthier, happier and more fulfilled lives."
- Martin L. Palmer "Excellence in Child Welfare Education" goes to... **Richard Anderson**. Ken says Richard lit up the day Ken mentioned the words "practice model," and Richard has been working on it non-stop ever since. Richard's whole-hearted, intelligent dedication to every aspect of the cause of child welfare, demonstrated by 27 years of working to try to make things better for DCFS and the children of Utah, would appear as pretty good evidence that he is indeed a worthy candidate for this year's Marty Palmer Award. Richard was most grateful as he, too, had known and greatly admired the life and work of Marty Palmer.
- Outstanding Work On Behalf of Children and Foster Parents: Ken presented **Kit Hansen** with a beautiful bouquet of yellow roses and DCFS' gratitude for the work she has done for the children and families of Utah. Kit and her husband Doug have fostered for 25+ years in Utah and California, and are best known for their care of children who are medically fragile. Kit is in her second term as the State Foster Family Association President; she serves on many DCFS/OL/Foundation committees; is a member of the Practice Model Development Team, and serves as a Practice Model Facilitator. She has worked tirelessly for many years to help improve working relationships between DCFS and foster parents.

According to Perry Mathews, Deputy Director of the Utah Division of Indian Affairs, there are currently eight federally-recognized Indian tribes in Utah: Navaho, Iapah Goshute, Skull Valley Goshute, Paiute, Uintah Ouray (Ute), Northwest Shoshone, San Juan Southern Paiute; and White Mesa Ute Council. For more information, visit the web site at [www.dced.state.ut.us/indian](http://www.dced.state.ut.us/indian).

## To All Child Welfare Institute Participants

*By Midge Delavan*

Thank you to all those who attended and presented at the sixth annual Child Welfare Institute. Congratulations to the awardees. We appreciate the opportunity for foster parents, partners, and staff to share their professional competence.

## Developing “Seasoned” Foster Families —Article 2

*By Joelle Horel*

Our second article in the series about foster family development addresses the best match criteria.

### **Matching**

Foster placements, like adoptive placements, are determined not by a waiting list, but by a number of specific criteria. All children in DCFS custody have special needs that create certain challenges when finding an appropriate foster home. For example, a child who tends to act-out aggressively may need to be the youngest or only child in a family. A child who has severe attachment problems may require a family who has experience with this disorder. A child who has a medical condition may need a family who is willing to spend time at the hospital, prior to discharge, learning how to administer treatments and medication.

A common placement requirement, which is fairly new to Utah, is the attempt to place a child near their home of origin whenever this can be done safely. Going into foster care is very scary for children! Being able to attend their same school, go to the same child care provider, see their friends, visit their pets, and spend time with family members helps minimize the trauma a child experiences.

Having the foster family know the resources available in its community and being aware of their family's strengths and vulnerabilities will help a placing worker decide whether or not a particular child will do well in their home. Share with foster parents that an appropriate match between a family and a child is worth the wait! Good matches between child and family greatly reduce the amount of moves a child will experience in foster care. Good matching also helps foster families succeed and remain willing to continue fostering.

## To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

*By Robert Lewis*

Ideally, SCF social workers should become involved with children removed from home no later than the 72-hour hearing that gives DCFS temporary custody, and SCF cases should be created to reflect and support this involvement. When SCF case creation is delayed in SAFE, several bad things happen: there is no place to record foster worker and health care worker activity, action items may be overdue immediately when the case does get created, workload counts are under-reported for that worker and region/office, etc.

We recommend that each office establish procedures and standards for creating these SCF cases no later than eight calendar days from date of removal. Here are offices that met this target for all their removals in the past 90 days (June 15 through September 15, 2000):

Region or Office	New SCF cases (06/15/00-09/15/00)	Average days from child removal to new SCF case creation
Vernal	4	2.8
Cedar	4	3.3
Beaver	5	3.5
St. George	19	4.3
Ute FS	13	4.8
Castle Dale	4	5.0
Eastern Region	75	5.5
Ogden	153	5.6
Price	30	5.7
Bountiful	9	5.7
Northern Region	225	5.9
Layton	47	5.9
Brigham	11	6.4
Payson	9	6.5

## Recognition from the Office of Child Protection Ombudsman

*By Pamela Gibbs*

The Office of Child Protection Ombudsman (OCPO) would like to recognize the following individuals from DCFS:

- **Patti VanWagoner**, for her role in a case investigated by OCPO in August 2000. Prior to OCPO involvement, Patti identified and corrected a procedure that was delaying case transfers among the DCFS Regions. Because of Patti's efforts, a recommendation to the OCPO concern was unnecessary.
- **Lance Martin** and **J.J. Glazier**, for the detailed and empathetic response they prepared for a client who contacted OCPO in September 2000. In addition to being factual and detailed, the response held DCFS accountable for actions taken on the case.